

**Approach to the Protection, Conservation and Nomination of  
St. George's Fortified System (Grenada)**



**TECHNICAL COOPERATION MISSION REPORT**

Written for :  
the Government of Grenada  
in commission of UNESCO's World Heritage Centre  
sponsored under the Netherlands Funds-in-Trust

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August 2004.

### 3. DESCRIPTION

#### 3a. Description of Property

The island of Grenada forms part of the Windward Islands archipelago and is bounded by the Caribbean Sea on its westerly shores, with the Atlantic Ocean on its easterly shores, northerly by the islands of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and southerly by the islands of Trinidad and Tobago. Grenada is the most southern Windward Island approximately 161 km north of Venezuela. The island is divided into six Parishes. St George's is the capital of Grenada and is located on the southwest coast of the island. The St. George's Fortified System is situated on the ridges of the sloping spiral of hills that surround St. George's and its natural harbour, up to an elevation of approximately 220 m over a distance of 1,370 meters.

The St. George's Fortified System consisted originally of eight military structures and has evolved predominantly over the eighteenth century. The three most significant forts of the system have survived and are now proposed as the core of the nomination of the St. George's Fortified System. The forts are captured in two core areas: the Fort George Core Area and the Richmond Hill Core Area, the northernmost part of Richmond Hill where Fort Fredrick and Fort Mathew are located. Along both core areas a buffer zone has been defined to act as a form of protective mechanism within which controlled development will be maintained. In the buffer zones the ruins of two other forts are included along with the most important tangible remains of a wider garrison support network that was established in and around St. Georges and concentrated around the forts<sup>3</sup> (see map 5).

*The aim of this approach is to give recognition to the fact that the St. George's Fortified System was more than a number of interlinked military structures. The system consisted of a network of both military and non-military structures; especially the latter were inextricably linked to the town and sometimes had both military and civic functions. The non-military structures do not qualify for World Heritage nomination as they lack outstanding universal value – both individually and as a group. Hence it is proposed to declare both military and non-military structures as associated national monuments and register the three most significant of the military structures additionally as World Heritage Monuments.*

***Recommendation 6: develop a site marker that both depicts and describes the history of (locations of) the military structures of the St. George's Fortified System and the wider garrison support network. The site marker should be placed on all the locations that it indicates; map 5 can serve as a basis for such a marker.***

#### Fort George Area

The Fort George Area is the nucleus from which the town of St. George's evolved and initiated the development of the St. George's Fortified System. The Fort George Core Area follows the boundary lines of the government property on which Fort George is located. The Fort George Buffer Zone covers the entire promontory on which Fort George is located and is further defined by a virtual boundary line that runs from the southernmost part of the Carenage to Mathew Street, from Mathew Street to Monckton Street and from Monckton Street to Young Street, where it encompasses the grounds of the Presbyterian Church. The extents of the Fort George Area are depicted on map 3.

#### World Heritage Monument: Fort George<sup>4</sup>

Fort George is arguably the flagship of the nomination as it is inextricably linked with the most significant periods of Grenada's history up to its contemporary period<sup>5</sup>. The fort currently houses the Police Headquarters and Police Training School.

It was built between 1706 and 1710 by the French upon an earlier battery on a promontory commanding a strategic view over the sea, the natural harbour and the direct hinterland where the town of St George's developed. Although the historical character of Fort George has diminished over the years due to a number of later additions its ground plan still embodies the theories and writings of Sébastien le Prestre de Vauban, chief military engineer under Louis XIV. Vauban's formalization of the methods of siegecraft, fortification and strategy in the seventeenth century exercised a profound influence on European military science throughout much of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The essence of his theories was the construction of a polygon of a given number of curtain walls with, at the points of each angle, a projecting angular bastion. From the flanks of the latter, defensive fire could be directed to the curtain walls. In the case of Fort George this basic approach

<sup>3</sup> See for an extensive description of the wider garrison support network: Jessamy, Michael, "Forts and Coastal Batteries of Grenada", Roland's Image, Grenada, 1998.

<sup>4</sup> Description partly based on: Smith, Victor, "Technical Report on Forts, George, Mathew and Frederick", part of the preliminary historic database for the revalorization of historical fortification, 2004

<sup>5</sup> The execution of Prime Minister Maurice Bishop in October 1983 was carried out at Fort George

was elaborated upon with additional layers of defence in the form of a ravelin and a hornwork and an esplanade, both at a descending level from the core of the fort.

#### *Richmond Hill Area*

The forts on Richmond Hill concluded a strategy of defense for St. Georges that was based on “an understanding that the amphitheatre of hills which crowd in on the town were a serious vulnerability if seized by an enemy able to dominate the port with his artillery but provided a strong position of resistance, if pre-emptively occupied by defensive works”<sup>6</sup>. The Richmond Hill Core Area consists of two government-owned properties on which Fort Mathew and Fort Frederick are located. The grounds between Fort Mathew and Fort Frederick with the parapet wall and the raised road, both connecting the two forts, belong with the Principal Guard House and its adjacent buildings to the same property as Fort Frederick and hence are part of the Richmond Hill Core Area. The Buffer Zone encompasses the properties on both side of the Richmond Hill Main Road and include the ruins of Fort Adolphus and Fort Lucas and the grounds of Her Majesty’s Prison and the Richmond Hill Tennis Club. The extents of the Richmond Hill Area are depicted on map 4.

#### *World Heritage Monument: Fort Frederick*<sup>7</sup>

Fort Frederick is the most prominent of the forts of Richmond Hill due to its location on the highest point of the ridge of the mountain and its function as a last place of retreat, made tangible by the high parapet walls of the redoubt. It was the principal battery, which had the heaviest firepower on the island, mounting four thirty-two pounders. Its most prominent features are the two lines of defence : the lower enclosure at entrance level, defined by a stone wall of irregular shape but without bastions or other outward defense features, and a redoubt which form roughly follows the shape of the lower enclosure. There is a small tunnel system underlying the western part of the lower enclosure and an original rectangular battery platform on the southwestern side of the lower enclosure is now occupied by a telecommunication tower and related concrete structures. Fort Frederick played a role in the events of October 1983 and is now in use as a public space that attracts both Grenadian and foreign visitors.

#### *World Heritage Monument: Fort Mathew*<sup>8</sup>

Fort Mathew was the northernmost stronghold erected on Richmond Hill and the biggest fortification on Grenada. It has been used for its original purpose until the British withdrew their soldiers from the fort in 1854. The design of Fort Mathew has been altered considerably from the end of the nineteenth until 1987, when it was used as a mental institution. The fort has been vacant from 1987 onwards. The outlines of the original ground plan of the fort can still be traced and are defined by the contour lines of the hill on which it is laid out. Its basic form has the shape of a tripod. One of the arms contained the main walled enclosure, annexed to which were two connected outworks, called the East and West Spurs, the two other arms of the tripod. The main walled enclosure held the most significant features of the fort : the Grand Battery , the barrack buildings, a cistern, the parade and an underground tunnel system connecting the Grand Battery to the barrack buildings. The encasemated Grand Battery, being the principal defensive feature of the fort, was directed to the mountain range to the east, as were most defenses on Richmond Hill. The fort was mistakenly bombed by United States jets in 1983 because of its close proximity to Fort Frederick, resulting in the death of some inmates and the ruining of the Officers' Quarters, one of the barrack buildings.

### **3b. History and Development**

Throughout its history the geographic location of Grenada, its numerous safe natural anchorages and the climatic environment made the island an important interchange and a safe and strategic crossroad for settlement and embarkation in the Windward Caribbean islands.

The Tainos, an Amerindian people group, were the first inhabitants of Grenada from as early as the 1st century A. D. Later the Caribs also settled on the island. The Amerindian name for Grenada was “Camerhogue”. When Christopher Columbus sighted the island during his third voyage on August 15, 1498, he named the island “Concepción”. Although never settled by the Spanish, they named the island “Granada” in reference to Granada in Andalusia, Spain. The French called the island ‘La Grenade’. ‘Grenada’ is the British name for the island. For many years, there was Carib resistance to European settlement. The first group of Europeans who tried to colonize Grenada was the French in 1609. The second French attempt was made in 1639. Caribs’ Leap in Sauteurs, St. Patrick, was the site of a Carib resistance in 1650, which ended when over 40 Caribs cornered by

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<sup>6</sup> Smith, Victor, “*Technical Report on Forts, George, Mathew and Frederick*”, part of the preliminary historic database for the revalorization of historical fortification, 2004

<sup>7</sup> Description partly based on: Smith, Victor, “*Technical Report on Forts, George, Mathew and Frederick*”, part of the preliminary historic database for the revalorization of historical fortification, 2004

<sup>8</sup> Ibid

the French leapt to their death rather than surrender. On March 28, 1675, the Dutch made an unsuccessful attempt to capture Grenada from the French. France handed over the island to Britain by the Treaty of Paris in 1763, however it captured it back in 1779. In 1783, the French handed the island back to Britain under the Treaty of Versailles. By 1795, the French inhabitants and the Africans on the island staged a resistance with the objectives to remove the British from Grenada and to set the slaves free. This resistance was lead by Julien (Julian) Fedon, an African who owned the coffee and cocoa plantation at Belvidere (Belvedere) in St. John. This resistance lasted fifteen months and Fedon was able to take control of at least ninety percent of the island including Carriacou. The only section of the island that Fedon was unable to control was St. George's, its immediate fortifications and an outpost at Calivigny Battery.

By 1806 St. George's and its Harbour were designated as the chief rendezvous for the merchant ships going to England under the convoy system and sailing under the protection of the British navy.

On August 1, 1834, the slaves in Grenada along with those in all the British Caribbean territories were given Emancipation. In 1877, Grenada became a Crown Colony until 1967 when the island gained control of its internal affairs as an Associated State in the British Commonwealth. Grenada achieved full Independence on February 1, 1974. By 1979, Maurice Bishop and his New Jewel Movement party seized power in Grenada, until 1983 when he and some of his aides were arrested and later executed at Fort George's by a faction within his party. A combined "rescue-mission" from the USA, Jamaica and the Eastern Caribbean intervened to help establish a democratic government in Grenada by 1984.

War and trading therefore helped shape the history and cultural landscape of the Caribbean, and St. George's stands as one of the outstanding examples. The Grenada social history shows that it developed as a Creole Society. In addition to the Europeans, there were Africans in Grenada who were not only slaves who helped to build and man the fortifications and the towns, but also were freedmen as plantation owners, local militiamen and resistance leaders. It is this Creole society of Grenada that helped to fashion the cultural heritage, leaving behind the outstanding architecture and military heritage of St. George's and the overall cultural environment of Grenada. The socio-political and economic development of Grenada and its shaping of Caribbean and world history, are embodied within its cultural heritage.

#### *History and development of the St George's Fortified System*

Although Fort George is not the first fort that was constructed on Grenada it proved to be the starting point from which the system developed, occupying the successive heights that surround St George's. It was built between 1706 and 1710 by the French upon an earlier battery on a promontory commanding a strategic view over the sea, the natural harbour and the direct hinterland where the town of St George's developed. Fort George appeared to have been designed to withstand a close attack from land but was vulnerable to an attack from the nearby hills: "The situation is well chosen for the defense of the Harbour and Bay but as it is commanded by the surrounding Country could not long resist an Enemy on shore supplied with Artillery – There are particularly two heights each about five hundred yards distant which look immediately into the fort: One is called the Hospital Hill, the other which is on the opposite side of the Harbour is called Monckton Redoubts."<sup>9</sup> Or, as Governor Macartney put it: "From the heights the very buckles on one's shoes could plainly be seen on the Parade".<sup>10</sup> These insights instigated the development of additional fortifications on the hills surrounding Fort George (see map 6).

Monckton's Redoubt was constructed by the French on the promontory on the other side of St George's Harbour to defend the early settlement that existed on a sand ridge separating the St George's Harbour from the Lagoon. The redoubt had fallen in disrepair after the abandonment of the early settlement for St George's around 1700 but the constant threat of invasion and its strategic position made the need felt to strengthen the site: "Moncktons Redoubts has to be repaired and put in the best posture of defence, field works in this country will admit if to have a double row of palisades or a strong abatis round it and four guns mounted here – In case the enemy should attack on this side. A strong detachment to be posted here, and the most obstinate defence made as the possession of this height could not fail or proving fatal to the fort. A path to be cut to the sea for the detachment to retreat by in the last extremity and spike nails or other means prepared to destroy the guns. The strength of the forts would not be administered by the loss of the several guns proposed to be sacrificed but great

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<sup>9</sup> unknown author, "A Report of the Defenses, with a State of the Ordinance Department in the Island of Grenada, and such. Additions as appear necessary for the better security of that Colony – 4th June 1778", C0 101/22 (PRO) The National Archives, taken from Smith, Victor, "Technical Report on Forts, George, Mathew and Frederick", part of the preliminary historic database for the revalorization of historical fortification, 2004

<sup>10</sup> C0 101/22 (PRO) The National Archives, quoted in Steele (2003), p86

caution should be used to secure this retreat of the different detachment as the number of troops is very inadequate to the defence of the fort”<sup>11</sup>.

The fortification of Hospital Hill originated with the construction of the Queen’s Battery, first depicted on a map in 1763.<sup>12</sup> During the second half of the eighteenth century the position on Hospital Hill was extended and strengthened: “A battery en barbet for three six pounders with Palisades or an abballis before it to be established on the Hospital Hill on the North-west extremity of the rider – An entrenchment to be made from this battery along the north side of the ridge, hill its passes, the saddle above fifty or sixty yards in a direction – so as to gain this height – a small circular. Entrenchment on the summit immediately above the saddle to the Eastward – The idea is to defend this battery and these Entrenchments as long as it may be possible so as to secure the retreat of the troops into the Fort for which paths of communication will be necessary.” And additionally: “To build a small redoubt and mount two pieces of cannon on that part of Hospital Ridge that terminated in a Knoll, on which some tall trees are growing to defend another saddle by which the Ridge might be gained from out of the valley leading to Simmons’ pasture – To throw up other intrenchments upon a height above Mr. Lucas’s house to prevent the ridge being gained by was of the Villa, in case the enemy should land to the South or South East, and march across the country – The troops in those intrenchments, to retreat by the way of the redoubt last proposed, then to make a second stand and in case of being driven from thence to spike or otherwise destroy the guns. The most expeditious and effectual method will be running them on their carriages over the precipice towards the sea.”<sup>13</sup>

The strategic importance of the position was underscored in 1779 during the invasion of the French who seized British positions and guns on Hospital Hill, from which they were able to dominate Fort George and force the surrender of the British.

The primary purpose of the fortifications on Richmond Hill was to control the hinterland of St George’s and prevent enemy attacks from the inlands. Although the fortifications were initiated by the French after their assault in 1779 most of the remains of the forts is of British origin.<sup>14</sup> The British continued the work the French had started after Grenada was returned to Britain under the Treaty of Versailles in 1783 and by the end of the eighteenth century four fortifications were constructed that occupied the entire ridgeline of Richmond. Fort Mathew was the northernmost stronghold, after which sequentially were Forts Frederick, Lucas and Adolphus. Forts Mathew and Frederick, the two most significant defenses, were joined by a parapet wall against close assault. Covered communication between the four forts was provided by the present day Richmond Hill Main Road.

The battery at Mount Cardigan was considered to be part of the defense system on Richmond Hill as well although it was constructed on a lower ridge between Richmond Hill and the Harbour and it was not designed to cover the hinterland but to control the harbour instead. It was constructed in the same period as the other fortifications.

After the construction of the forts on Richmond Hill the development of the St George’s Fortified System ended. In the course of the nineteenth century hostilities between European nations came to an end and the Caribbean gradually lost its economic importance to the Europeans, which led to the decline of the Caribbean region. Most of the forts fell in disrepair or were used for other purposes; the forts proposed for inscription on the World Heritage List have been preserved and are linked to Grenada’s social history up to its contemporary period.

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<sup>11</sup> “A Return of the Works proposed and recommended to be immediately executed for the better defence of Fort Royal – 15th May 1778.” C0/101/21 (PRO), The National Archives, taken from Smith, Victor, “Technical Report on Forts, George, Mathew and Frederick”, part of the preliminary historic database for the revalorization of historical fortification, 2004

<sup>12</sup> “Grenada. Plan of the Town and Harbour of FortRoyal, with a perspective view of the Fort , Queen’s Battery at the Hospital, and Mockton’s Redoute. Survey’d and plan’d 26 July, 1763, by Will Cockburn” CO 700/ Grenada 1, The National Archives

<sup>13</sup> “A Return of the Works proposed and recommended to be immediately executed for the better defence of Fort Royal – 15th May 1778.” C0/101/21, The National Archives, taken from Smith, Victor, “Technical Report on Forts, George, Mathew and Frederick”, part of the preliminary historic database for the revalorization of historical fortification, 2004

<sup>14</sup> Smith, Victor, “Technical Report on Forts, George, Mathew and Frederick”, p.70. part of the preliminary historic database for the revalorization of historical fortification, 2004



# Map 5

## St George's Fortified System

### Military Structures

- A. Fort George
- B. Old Fort
- C. Monckton's Redoubt
- D. Mount Cardigan
- E. Fort Mathew
- F. Fort Frederick
- G. Fort Lucas
- H. Fort Adolphus

### Garrison Support Network

- 01. Ordnance store
- 02. Commandants Quarters
- 03. Ordnance depot
- 04. Main Gaol
- 05. Drill yard
- 06. Governor's house
- 07. Bachelor's quarters
- 08. Parade Square
- 09. Treasurer's house
- 10. Ordnance wharves
- 11. Officers' barracks
- 12. Engineer's point
- 13. Guard station
- 14. Parade grounds
- 15. Officers' quarters
- 16. Officers' mess hall
- 17. Royal artillery guard house



0 100 500m



# Map 6

## St George's Fortified System

Design Concept

**F** preserved

**B** ruin

**D** disappeared

